

Ishwar Puri

# “Know Thyself”

The Nature and Structure of Human Consciousness

*The Anatomy of Consciousness*

*SERIES II*



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# “Know Thyself”

The Nature and Structure of Human  
Consciousness

*The Anatomy of Consciousness*

## *SERIES II*

An examination and exploration of the levels of Human-Consciousness, and the varieties of conscious experiences.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	i
<b>Chapter One</b>	
KNOW THYSELF .....	1
<b>Chapter Two</b>	
THE NATURE AND VARIETIES OF CONSCIOUS EXPERIENCES .....	6
<b>Chapter Three</b>	
THE ANATOMY OF CONSCIOUSNESS.....	12
<b>Chapter Four</b>	
LEVELS OF HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS (Part I)....	18
LEVELS OF HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS (Part II) ..	35
<b>Chapter Five</b>	
DEEPER ASPECTS OF CONSCIOUSNESS .....	50

## INTRODUCTION

The nature and anatomy of human consciousness is the most enigmatic, though fascinating problem in philosophy, religion and modern psychology. And although the problem is bound to remain always unsolved by the study of these things alone, it will continue to engage the attention of philosophers and clergymen for all time to come, because the ultimate basis of all reality, of all human experience, is human consciousness. It is the very core of our being, as well as the cause and basis of the entire universe we perceive all around us.

Although human consciousness has been referred to by such terms as the soul, the mind, and in some extreme cases, the physical brain, it remains beyond all intellectual comprehension. Nevertheless, from the intellectual point of view, it is the most profound concept in the whole realm of philosophy, religion and science. Some of the lower aspects of this subject can be studied and understood by almost anyone who brings to the subject an open mind and a sincere desire to know the truth about the nature of his own conscious experiences.

But the higher aspects of this subject, which are related to the very structure and mechanics of human consciousness, are

intended to throw some light on the “ultimate” questions in the field of philosophy, religion and psychology. Therefore, a “trained” intellect and sustained interest will be necessary. The serious student of human awareness, who really wants to understand the deepest mysteries of life, must be prepared to give some time and study this subject systematically.

In this second series of “THE ANATOMY OF CONSCIOUSNESS”, I have tried to deal with the principles underlying the behavior and anatomy of human consciousness. But at best, this presentation is only an attempt to provide a faint and blurred “intuitive” glimpse of the beauty and grandeur of this higher knowledge. Nevertheless, you are invited to take a plunge into the “greatest” mystery which can confront you—the mystery of your own being . . . HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS.

LEONARD INGRAM

1983

## **Chapter One**

### **KNOW THYSELF**

Why did Socrates suggest that we should know our self? No one had ever suggested that one know oneself, because all knowledge is always of something else! A man may know millions and millions of things; he can become acquainted with the whole world, but if he is not aware of the “knower”, he is still ignorant! He may become very knowledgeable, but he will not become “wise”. He may collect much information and much knowledge, but the basic thing which makes one a “knower” is lacking—he is not aware of himself! But what, you may ask, is there to know about the self? It looks a little strange that this question should even be asked! People like Socrates are continually telling you to “know thyself”... but you do not want to know yourself—you have already decided that you “KNOW” who you are. But do we really “know” what the “self” is? Even men with great philosophical and scientific insight are perplexed by this question. We are the self, what else is there to know about it?

It seems very strange and even unnecessary that this question has continued to be asked for over 2,000 years! But it

is a question still posed and still not fully answered. The most important question that mankind has ever encountered is “Who am I?” But, it is a question which cannot be answered by anyone other than yourself. You have to look within your own self for the answer. You have to search; you have to become a seeker. It is a question which is absolutely private, and only you are capable of knowing the answer. It can only be answered through a deep inquiry into the core of your own being.

Today, there are thousands of philosophers, poets, yogis and so on, who are still busy working on this problem of “knowing thyself.” In Indian lore, there is a story told of a man who went to a yogi and knocked at his door. The yogi said “Who’s there?” but there was no answer. There came a second knock and again the yogi asked “Who’s there?” and still there was no answer. The yogi shouted “Why don’t you say who you are?” still no answer came! Third knock, the yogi screamed, “I said who are you? . . . What do you want?” The man answered, “If I knew that, I would not be knocking at your door! I have come precisely for the answer to this question.” This is the case with us all. You are aware that, deep down within you, somehow YOU are missing . . . you exist but you don’t know why; you don’t know how; you don’t even know WHO exists within you! You are somehow absent . . . you exist absently. You “exist”, but

you do not know what this “you” is. You do not “know thyself!” Man is unable to explain what he (himself) is, and this absence of “self-knowledge” has caused us to identify our self with the things we possess, instead of the “one” who possesses the thing.

What is “mine” cannot be “me”! It is this false identification with what is “mine” but which could not possibly be “me”, that creates all of our problems. Whatever is mine cannot be me! If I say that this thing is mine, then it cannot be me! If I say that this jacket I am wearing is mine, then I clearly understand that the jacket is not me! When I assert that this jacket is mine, I am consciously aware of the fact that “I” am different from the jacket! That is why I call it “mine”, and not “me”. I possess it, I own and use it, I wear it. It is something that belongs to me; something I carry around with me, but it cannot be me. This mine/me distinction must be clearly understood in order to fully grasp the extent of the fallacy we are making regarding what we are. We say that this body is mine, yet this body cannot be “me”! We say that these are my eyes, yet these eyes cannot be “me” either! We say that this is my mind, yet the mind cannot possibly be “me”! “My” soul, “my” emotions, “my” this and “my” that—none of these things could possibly be “me”, by the simple understanding of the mine/me distinction. Then what is the “me”? All that we have been

identifying as the self belongs to us, but is actually not us. If they were, then we wouldn't call them "mine"—we would say it's "me"! What the "me" is, we have not been able to say yet. You have never encountered yourself. You have never come face to face with yourself—there has been no meeting. You simply "believe" you are this or that . . . that you are the things you have become identified with.

Whenever we have attempted to describe our "self", we have only been able to describe that which belongs to us. Therefore, if we ever want to understand what the "me" is, we must first discover who is saying this is mine. Who is claiming? Who is this claimant who is saying the body is "mine", the mind is "mine", the soul is "mine" . . . who is claiming all this? If we can discover who this claimant is, we will be able to finally answer the question, "What is the self?" Therefore, let us examine what is making these various claims—this house is mine, this family is mine, these children are mine, this body is mine and so on? It does not take very long to discover that it is "human consciousness" that is making all these claims! If we were not conscious and not human, no such claims could be made! If you were unconscious, you could never make all these claims. Therefore, the identity of the individual who is continually claiming this or that is "mine", is linked directly and

exclusively with his own consciousness! Without it, no claims could be made.

## **Chapter Two**

### **THE NATURE AND VARIETIES OF CONSCIOUS EXPERIENCES**

Human consciousness seems to provide the answer as to what the self is. Knowing this, you will “know thyself.” In the journey towards knowing the self, all we have to do is discover the nature of our “own” consciousness. How are we conscious? What makes us conscious . . . what makes us aware? Most people feel we are experiencing human awareness because we have a brain; that the phenomenon of awareness and sensory perceptions are being generated by the human brain which, while we are alive, creates consciousness. But this is not entirely true.

There are many instances, while alive, where we do not experience awareness, and yet, the brain and the entire physical system remain functional! Examine the state of deep sleep. When we are in a state of deep sleep, our brain is there, the body and all of its support systems are still intact; we are alive and yet we are not CONSCIOUS! We do not experience awareness! If the experience of consciousness was merely based on the physical apparatus in the human body, then consciousness could

not be shut off while the physical system is still on! Moreover, if it is the brain in the physical body that generates human consciousness, even then, there are still many other species of conscious experiences that cannot be attributed to the human brain. Certain cases of extra sensory perception, recall of previous lives (reincarnation), are clear instances of the functioning of consciousness outside of the data field available to the human brain and the physical system. Leaving aside these extra sensory experiences going on in human consciousness, and confining our examination to simply “non” wakeful experiences, we discover that we are still able to have conscious perceptions which are not part of the physical system, i.e. dreams! Some dreams are so fantastic and bizarre that they cannot be traced to any experience or data picked up by the physical brain during the wakeful state of consciousness.

The perceptive apparatus of the physical body, which picks up experiences via its sensory systems, receives these impressions of the world around us which then travels from the organs of perception, through the nervous system, and the brain then picks up these messages. But it is ONLY WHEN WE ARE CONSCIOUS THAT THE BRAIN WILL PICK UP THESE IMPRESSIONS! Please make a note of this! If consciousness, which must casually precede experience, was not there, the

brain will not pick up any of the messages coming through the nervous system! If we are not conscious, the brain will not generate any response, even though it is functioning? Therefore, consciousness, *per se*, is the basis of perception and not the physical brain! However, the question of what makes us conscious still remains unanswered.

The question of what causes us to be conscious is a question that we have all been asking ourselves for thousands of years, and still we have not found the answer. Our scientists have only been able to tell us which parts of the brain EXPRESS this or that aspect of consciousness. They are able, to some extent, to tell us which part of the brain is at work when we have audio or visual perceptions and so on, but what is causing conscious perception, they cannot say! They have not, in spite of their elaborate equipment and labs, been able to find this out. They can only say that a certain part in the center of the brain, which descends down into the medulla oblongata, into the spine, when choked off—shuts down most of our perceptive experiences . . . but not all. You will still retain some control over a few of the motor activities. Therefore, our scientists cannot say that consciousness is controlled and generated by this part of the human brain because it is not. In fact, our scientists still have very limited information on what constitutes

consciousness. They still do not know what makes a man conscious. But it has become obvious, especially to scientists working in this field, that what enables us to be conscious is not something that is material. Yet, it does seem to be embodied in matter, in the physical brain or in this physical body somewhere. But somehow or other, we are still capable of having conscious experiences outside of the domain and field of data available to the physical system, i.e. certain types of dreams.

In certain dreams, people have dreamt that they were a little bird and that they flew out of a window and so on. They “personally” experienced being a bird! I am taking this kind of dream simply as an example of a “non” wakeful conscious experience and not for any other reason. Don’t give it too much importance. But suppose you were to go to sleep and have this kind of a dream in which you are a bird. You become a bird and fly out of the window. You will then have the conscious experience of BEING a bird . . . that you were actually a bird! Upon awakening, naturally you will discover that you are not a bird, but a human being with a human body. You realize that you don’t have feathers, that you don’t have wings and so on and that you cannot fly! There is no resemblance between the bird and yourself. But still, you do not say, in my dream “I SAW A BIRD THAT FLEW OUT OF A WINDOW”! You will say, I

WAS a bird and I flew out of the window! The experience retained the personal self. It retains your own human consciousness, and if you say to a friend that last night you dreamed you were a bird flying all around, your friend will say that this is simply nonsense! There is no resemblance between you and a bird. Just say that you “saw” a bird flying in your dream last night, otherwise people will think you are either stupid or have gone mad! But you will say, NO! I didn’t “see” a bird . . . I wasn’t looking at some bird flying out of a window, I “WAS” A BIRD! I never “saw” it! I flew! I was flying! It is the retention of the identity of being the SAME conscious experiencer when awake, whose body became that of a bird which compels you to make this claim! Here is a conscious experience quite outside of the physical body. Therefore, human consciousness is capable of having awareness, in the form of a bird or otherwise, and can generate an experience of the world around it.

Even “dream” bodies, which are bodies different from the human body we have identified ourselves with, are also assumed to be the origin of human consciousness. In a dream, consciousness functions in a different form from this physical body. We walk around all over and come back to this form only when we awaken.

Consciousness, the capacity of the human self to have awareness and generates conscious experiences of the world around it, could not possibly be generated by the physical body or any part of it, i.e., the physical brain. Therefore, no wonder we say this is “my” body, and that is not “me”! It is just proper that we say this, because “me” is the consciousness that claims that this body is used by it; that it belongs to me—I just function through it! What then, is consciousness without the physical body, without a dream body and so on, like? The practitioners of the art of self-realization, based on their own personal experiences, have constructed a very simple model of the structure and anatomy of human consciousness.

## **Chapter Three**

### **THE ANATOMY OF CONSCIOUSNESS**

Before we examine the nature and structure of human consciousness, I would like to define a few terms that I will be using in the consideration of this subject. They have been used so loosely and with so many different meanings that you can easily become very confused. These terms had been used by so many different people with different minds, different backgrounds and conditioning and so on, that they are bound to have a different meaning to you. Even in ordinary conversation when you say something, you say it with one meaning; But when it reaches the other person, he gives a different meaning to those same words. When this is the case with ordinary conversation, imagine the problem that can arise when we discuss a subject as subtle as this. Understanding the meaning of these terms, as I will be using them, will enable us to avoid many problems arising from semantics and will enable you, at once, to clearly understand exactly what I will be explaining.

The terms that I would like to define are: consciousness, awareness, attention, subconsciousness, superconsciousness, unconsciousness and “psychic” energy forces. These are all

terms which I will be frequently using while discussing this subject. Therefore, it will be useful to know what they mean. This will facilitate the transfer of a great deal of knowledge about the anatomy of human consciousness.

I am using the word consciousness in a much larger sense than it is commonly used. Consciousness is the possibility, the potential to be conscious, the compulsion to be conscious. It is the everlasting experience of being conscious. It needs no fuel; it needs no rest. It is pure energy . . . perpetual internal energy! It is the totality of potential awareness . . . the capacity to be conscious. Consciousness is not merely the capacity to be conscious at a particular moment, but it also includes the potential and possibility to be conscious at any given moment throughout the entire domain of time-space continuum! Consciousness includes the potential to be conscious of the past as well as the future! It even includes the capacity to be conscious of those experiences which occur OUTSIDE of the time-space continuum as well! Consciousness, they say, is the totality of our capacity to have conscious experiences per se. Whether we are immediately aware of it or not! Consciousness includes the conscious awareness of a contemporary experience, as well as the potential capacity to be aware of any experience—whether within the time-space complex or outside of it. On the

other hand, awareness represents that region of consciousness of which we are conscious at any given time.

Awareness is the “present” field of consciousness—what we are now (immediately) conscious of. It is our “available” consciousness. Out of the totality of consciousness, something of it is flowing through time into immediate consciousness . . . into awareness. This does not simply mean what is being perceived through the sensory system . . . what we are now seeing, hearing, tasting and so on. It also includes the things you are not seeing or hearing, but have the potential to see, hear and so on. Those things which you can become aware of, whenever you want to; which is also “available” in the same time frame. Those also belongs to the scope and domain of “awareness”.

Attention is a probe, a narrowed down beam of awareness, which is focused onto a particular area in the domain of the immediate conscious experiences available to us. Attention is that part of awareness we are moving around, inside the domain of our possible experience, in order to become “more” aware of a certain part of it; to give it a greater significance in consciousness; to become “consciously aware” of it. Therefore, attention is simply that part of awareness that we are using to focus our consciousness upon something. For example, the whole room you are sitting in is a part of your awareness, now.

But, your “attention” is on this book, this particular page and line . . . this particular word! Therefore, your attention is picking up only a part of the “available” awareness in the room in which you are sitting! You can pick up other parts also, by shifting and manipulating your attention from one thing to another. Whenever the attention is shifted from one object to another, you will be picking up certain parts in your field of immediate awareness, in order to have a closer look at them. Human attention is that faculty in consciousness which enables us to have this deeper experience of any part of the domain of our awareness.

Human attention also performs another function in human consciousness. It also enables us to become LESS aware of a certain part of our experience! It’s a double-edged sword, which cuts both ways. It can increase your power to be conscious of a thing, and at the same time it enables you to cut off the awareness of whatever you do not wish to experience! Later, you will see how this second feature of attention is even more important than the first.

Subconsciousness is a storage area. It is that part of consciousness in which our memories are stored. It is that area of consciousness which lies outside the field of our immediate awareness. Subconsciousness is that part of consciousness of

which you are unaware of by virtue of “forgetfulness”; by virtue of the shutting down or inhibiting of the memory process. But it can be regained and brought back into the field of our immediate awareness when we turn on the memory process.

Unconsciousness is simply another name for subconsciousness. It is a more modern term and is used more frequently than subconsciousness, because the subconsciousness is not really a “part” of awareness—we have actually forgotten it. Therefore, the word “unconsciousness” has been preferred, but there is no real difference between the two of them.

Superconsciousness is the capacity to bring into awareness, the level of consciousness lying outside of the field of our immediate awareness through a process of “expanding” awareness! Thus, the distinction between subconsciousness or unconsciousness and Superconsciousness would be, that subconsciousness can be brought into the field of awareness by the use of memory—whereas, super consciousness is brought into the field of awareness by the technique of expanding awareness . . . often referred to as meditation.

“Psychic” energy force is the flow of “currents” of consciousness coming through the centers of the physical body,

from outside of the scope and domain of awareness. “Psychic” energy flow is that part of consciousness which operates through energy centers in the physical vehicle of the human self, the human body. It enables the experience to flow outwards, as well as inwards. It enables an experience to be “objective” or “subjective” . . . or both! The physical body has a continuous flow of conscious energy of consciousness, travelling throughout all of its parts! This energy flows out from the body, into our experiences lying within the domain of awareness. It flows out through sense perceptions. It then sustains these physical experiences, and makes them a close-circuit experience. This energy flows through the human body from fixed centers, which then function as the focal points for the flow of consciousness throughout our entire physicality!

Having defined these terms, it now becomes clear that when we speak of levels of consciousness, we are not merely speaking of levels of awareness, but more fundamentally, we are speaking of levels of “possible” awareness—levels of potential awareness.

## **Chapter Four**

### **LEVELS OF HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS (Part I)**

A higher level of consciousness is qualitatively different from a lower level of awareness, and is not merely “knowing” more about the world which is around us. I am making this point because very often students of awareness, and even practitioners of the art of meditation, make the mistake of regarding expansion of awareness as raising the level of consciousness. One can know a great deal about this world by increasing awareness, but it would not mean he has attained a higher level of consciousness.

For example, suppose you are now aware of the room you are sitting in, but not aware of the rest of the world around you. You then decide to become aware of it by “raising” your level of consciousness through some particular technique or meditational practice. Actually, the level of consciousness you have “attained” remains the same as before. It is the same level of consciousness out of which, at first, only the room was in awareness; afterwards more of the world came into awareness. The rest of the world comes into awareness—this is all that has

happened! This kind of “expanding” of one’s awareness does not lead to any “higher” level of consciousness. One has simply expanded his “awareness” at the SAME level of consciousness! Yet, there are hundreds of students and practitioners of the art of meditation, who go on thinking that since something more has come into their immediate field of awareness; they have, in fact, reached a higher level of consciousness. This, however is not true. What then are these higher levels of consciousness?

These higher levels of consciousness are related to our concepts, at any given moment, of what the “self” is! When we regard this physical body as our ownself, then we are in the “physical” level of Consciousness! All of the awareness that comes to us about the physical world, about anything that is happening on earth, in this physical universe, would be degrees of awareness within a single level of human consciousness called the “physical” level of consciousness. This physical level of consciousness would represent our “wakeful” state. The state of consciousness you are now in. The state in which you are reading this book. This state is called the “wakeful” state of physical consciousness. This is considered one of the lowest levels of human consciousness. If, while in this state of consciousness, you happen to have a number of weird or bizarre experiences, it would not constitute a change in your level of

consciousness. They would only be different experiences. They may be different degrees of awareness, but the level of consciousness would be the same, i.e. the physical “wakeful” level of consciousness.

When you go to sleep and have a dream, then this “dream state” would constitute a still lower level of consciousness! Why lower? Why not different? Because, in the dream state, you do not even use this physical body at all. You use a “dream” body, which is different, more ethereal, and has been created only for the purpose of that particular dream. It is the dream body alone which senses and experiences the dream world. Therefore, the dream is a lower level of consciousness. It is sustained by a dream body, by an “imaginary” body that you have created yourself through the mental process of dreaming.

Another reason why we consider the dream level of consciousness as a lower level of consciousness, is because the dream level is always “sandwiched” between two wakeful states of consciousness! When we are “awake” we can shut off this wakeful state of consciousness by going to sleep; by merely becoming “unconscious” of our physical body! When you relax and shut off the awareness of your physical body, you move into the dream state automatically! But it is an experience of a very short duration, followed by a much longer state of wakefulness.

In a long wakeful state, a lifetime lasting many years between birth and death, we have many experiences of these short dream sequences, which are lower levels of consciousness. While we are asleep, we become unconscious of our body, and then a dream sequence starts. But when we awaken, we not only get back the consciousness of our body, we also realize that we were always in this world, even while asleep! This realization that we were in this world all the time makes the dream a lower level of consciousness.

The knowledge that the body, in which you have slept; the body which was laying on the bed before and is still lying on the bed when you wake up, is all that is necessary to convince you that you were asleep. We don't have to open our eyes; we don't have to pinch ourselves to see if we are awake. All that is required is that we remember we went to sleep. The fact that we retain the continuity of the physical experience preceding the dream state proves that this "wakeful" state is more real! The immediate recall of our earlier state of physical wakeful consciousness, upon awakening gives us certain proof that the dream state was only temporary, and not "real", and whenever we have an experience of a higher level of consciousness than this wakeful state, a similar change must also takes place. It must be a kind of "awakening" into another kind of body, not

this one, which we discover was existing throughout the entire duration of the “wakeful sequence”—a body of which we had become temporarily unconscious! Then, and then alone, can we say that we have raised our level of consciousness to a higher level!

When one examines the different experiences which have been regarded as superconscious experiences, one will find that many of these experiences are dream-like—that the person must be having some weird or fantastic dream, and is mistakenly calling it a “higher” level of consciousness. You may be a very wise and learned dreamer; you can be very knowledgeable in your dream, but a dreamer is a dreamer. You can dream of very beautiful sights and scenes of golden temples and sweet music . . . even of heaven, but no dream, however beautiful it may be, however high it may look, could ever be a higher level of consciousness, unless it results in a “higher” state of wakefulness. If they do not provide us with a body, in which we have consciousness over a much longer period of time than in this physical body, it is not a higher level of consciousness! When you attain a real and true higher level of consciousness, you will awake into a different body which exists at that level of consciousness; which has been with you all the time! It was there, even while you were having this physical experience.

This then, is a very easy test to apply. Many yogic states, which are misrepresented as a higher level of consciousness, are merely different levels of awareness contained in the “same” level of consciousness, namely, the wakeful level. Very often, these trances which yogis can attain are trances induced by a type of “sleep” in which the dream episode is regulated. But a dream is a dream, however regulated it may be! It is “maya”, an illusion, the “stuff” of which dreams are made. These so-called “inner” experiences may be unusual, and perhaps even beautiful, but they are mistakenly being called superconscious experiences—experiences of a higher level of consciousness.

Most of them will be found not to be experiences of a higher level of consciousness. Indeed, they are of a lower level of consciousness, or a different awareness at the same level of consciousness. When a higher level of consciousness is experienced, you will have the sensation of waking up from a dream! You will recall, in your own memory, the point in time when you fell “asleep” into this lower wakeful state of consciousness. Unless this recall comes, you cannot be sure of having had an experience of a higher level of consciousness.

When we awaken from a dream, we don’t pinch ourselves; we don’t ask questions and so on. No proof is required! Every morning you wake up, every night you go to sleep. But you

never go about asking people if you are awake or still dreaming! You never do this. You are CERTAIN that you are awake. What makes you so certain? It is the recall, the memory of the fact that you went to sleep! If you did not remember that you had gone to sleep, you would never be sure that the intervening experience was a dream. In other words, to have a dream, you must first be awake!

In the same way, in order to have a higher experience than this wakeful level of consciousness, there must be the recall of a higher level of consciousness from which we had earlier descended (in a dream-like way), into this present wakeful level of consciousness! When we rise back to that higher level of consciousness, the experience should be identical to that of waking from a dream. We should be able to recall when we went into this lower state of physical wakeful consciousness. It is precisely this kind of proof that comes to those who are able to truly shift their level of consciousness one step above this physical level of consciousness, to what is called the “astral” level of consciousness.

What happens when you shift the level of consciousness one step up to the astral level? When this is done, the reverse of what happens when you go into the dream state takes place. When you go into the dream state, you merely pick up a few of

the perceptions from the wakeful state and re-jumble them into a less coherent, less consistent framework of rules and laws; you then have an experience within this framework. In this present state of wakeful consciousness, we experience everything in a regulated time frame. Todays follow yesterdays and tomorrows follow todays. However, in a dream, this need not happen. Todays can be followed by yesterday and so on, and it will not bother you in a dream. Time gets all jumbled up, flows backwards, discontinues and so on. Yet, never does such dream experiences seem unusual. While in that state of consciousness, it looks odd and even queer, but we still take those events as REAL!

In a dream, we often do some of the most bizarre things. We can defy all the laws of nature pertaining to the wakeful experience, yet they are accepted as natural and real while dreaming. Here we must follow the laws of gravity. In a dream, we may walk on the ceiling and it would not bother us! We carry people from the wakeful state and in our dream, we jumble up their relationships to us and to each other. Your wife may be your daughter in a dream or your boss becomes your son and so on, and yet these jumbled up roles seem quite real to us while in the dream state. It is only when we shift our consciousness, to the higher wakeful state of consciousness, do we see the

“higher reality” on which the dream had been based. Similarly, this whole world is like a dream and has a higher reality than we can see at this level of physical, wakeful consciousness. Just look around you. Watch the people you are around, look at their faces. Notice how they are moving about. Watch their gestures and so on. A few are simply talking to themselves; no one is really listening to each other. Their lips are just moving, they themselves don’t even know what they are saying! Everyone seems to be in a dream, in a world of his own—that is why there is so much conflict and friction.

Each person is living in their own dream world, so whenever two persons come close, sooner or later, the friction will happen. It is bound to happen because their “dreams” cannot coincide—and everybody wants to impose his dream upon the other. This is the problem, because you cannot interpose your dream with another person. You cannot share it with others. You cannot force your husband or wife to “see things your way”! He or she is dreaming, and so are you! And dreaming is such a private phenomenon that you become completely unaware of the “real” world which surrounds you. This reality can be “seen” at the next higher level of consciousness . . . the “astral” level of consciousness!

At the astral level, the same people we know at this

wakeful level of consciousness, are seen in a much more “real” sense. At this physical level of consciousness, we are having a distorted experience, and therefore people appear to be doing stupid and foolish things. But, this is a lower level of consciousness, and if we could see these same people from a higher level of consciousness, they would be seen to be far more consistent, far more beautiful and wiser than now. This foolishness that we are seeing in them at this physical level of awareness, is a distortion of their “higher reality” taken from the higher (astral) level of consciousness!

At the astral level of consciousness, everyone is more beautiful, more intelligent and wise; events are all much more consistent. Individuals who have experienced this higher astral level of consciousness, who have “awakened” into this higher level, recall that they were here before going into this “dream-like” wakeful state. And they have described the experience as a very beautiful one. An experience in which they are able to see the light and the beauty in all things and all people. People who look so ugly here are seen to be really radiant and beautiful from the astral level of consciousness. They have light glowing around them! Even nature is seen to be much more beautiful than ordinarily conceivable at this lower level of consciousness. The astral experience is “aesthetically” superior to anything that

we know of at this level. Even in terms of our non-sensual experiences, everything is very different!

At the astral level of consciousness, it is no longer necessary to use words in order to communicate! The method of communication used by those who have awakened to the astral level of consciousness is telepathic. They simply think out something and the other person knows what is being thought! The normal means of communication at the astral level is telepathy. Although at this level of consciousness, one can also use speech, If he so desires. Words are then used merely to add beauty to communication. Everything connected with this higher astral level of consciousness is superior, especially the amount of knowledge we are able to pick up! There is a store house of knowledge there, which is based on the work done by “astral conscious” people for billions of years! Here, at the physical level of consciousness, we go to a university or library and select a particular subject to know more about. We read various books on physics, chemistry, etc., and we are then able to benefit from the history of the scientific research done in these fields. If we want, we can do experiments to build upon the work already done in certain areas. Similarly, at the astral level of consciousness, we are able to do the same thing . . . with one big difference!

At the astral level, if you are interested in a particular subject, you go to the “AKASHIC” libraries, and there, not only will you be able to study what HAS been done, but also what WILL be done on earth for the next 2,000 years! It is a different kind of learning experience! People who have been able to get into this higher level of consciousness are collecting immense knowledge in those libraries. Knowledge, which can be verified again and again, is available there. Not only is the knowledge available at this level much greater, but the whole concept of time and space are also different there!

At the astral level of consciousness, we are able to travel huge distances to any part of space. There, we are not bounded by the velocity of the speed of light as we are here! At this physical level of consciousness, our sensory perceptions are confined to this physical body and the various mechanical means of locomotion devised for its use. None of these are able to travel faster than the velocity of light. And because of the relatively low velocity we are able to travel, our experience gets restricted to a very, very limited area of space. Scientists have very recently discovered quasars traveling at velocities beyond the velocity of light at the fringes of space. Beyond the velocity of light, there exists an immense space, completely inaccessible to anything which cannot exceed the velocity of light! At this

lower physical level, because we move far below the velocity of light, we can never cross over to have any experience in this part of space.

At the astral level of consciousness, which is a much higher level than this physical level, we are able to “transcend” the speed of light. We are actually able to have locomotion—to have mobility at much “higher” velocities than light . . . over much greater distances than the distances available to the physical body. Therefore, the space which we have for travel is correspondingly much greater at the astral level. The space is far greater than that which we are aware of at this lower physical level of consciousness. A trip, even to the very fringes of space, as we know it, would be nothing compared to the trips one can make at the astral level of consciousness! This is an experience which anyone can have, by shifting to the higher “astral” level of consciousness. This is not simply a theoretical possibility. It is a practical possibility as well. All that is required is the “raising” of consciousness one step above this present wakeful state. When this is done, we discover that we have the capacity to see better, to communicate better, to hear better . . . the capacity to do everything with the senses better, at the astral level of consciousness. All of these capacities lie dormant in human consciousness.

The question naturally arises as to what facility available to us is to be used for such “astral” travel and experience? We use what is called the “astral” body. It is our “vehicle” for experiences at the astral level of consciousness. The “astral” body is nothing more than the “pure” form of the sensory perceptions that are locked up in this physical body! It is the gross material out of which this physical vehicle of human consciousness is constructed that limits our movement. When we want to go somewhere, what keeps us from going there directly and immediately? It is the physical body! You have to carry it with you. If you did not have to carry it, you could go anywhere you want, anytime, and AT ONCE! What prevents you from flying out of your window right now and taking a trip around the city? The world? It is the physical body! It would fall down and be broken to pieces! If you could somehow be relieved of the grossness of the physical body, you will find that there is nothing in your sensory system of perception preventing you from having the entire experience of this world . . . of the universe! The astral body, which enables us to have this “astral” experience, is being carried or locked up within us all the time!

In fact, our sensory experiences, even while functioning with this physical body, is arising from the astral body (which exists inside the physical body)! If this astral body were to cease,

even just for a second, this physical body would become simply a lump of dead clay! We would have no feeling in it! All the feelings, all the senses, all the perceptions experienced through the physical body are arising from the presence of the astral body residing within the physical body. Our sensory system exists per se, and is entirely independent of this physical body. So, when we are able to free up the operating of our sensory system from the restriction of the physical body, we regain the capacity in consciousness to function entirely free of the limitations of time and space! This experience is often referred to as “astral projection” or “astral travel”, because it is with the astral body that we are able to have these kinds of beautiful experiences.

The astral body shines and glows and has a shape very much like that of this physical body. It has hands and feet with which it moves from place to place. This astral body does precisely the same thing that is done by this physical body, except it does it with infinitely greater speed, beauty and efficiency! Only those who have had the astral experience are able to know how beautiful it is. I don’t know why I am even trying to describe it in words! I am just trying to convince you that it is a superior state of consciousness by highlighting some of the features of the astral experience. We were all in this

“astral form” before we were born! Birth is merely falling to sleep into this physical level of consciousness. What we are considering as a lifetime, is nothing more than a dream arising from the astral level of consciousness, and at the time of what we call death, the astral body “awakes”. We will then recall that we had simply fallen asleep! The entire set of memories from the previous life we led, prior to birth, comes back into our recollection, and we can see them!

When we are able to have the astral experience now, i.e. to “DIE WHILE LIVING”, we are then able to explain many things that we otherwise are not able to comprehend. For example, we meet many people whom we dislike at first sight. We don’t know why, because they have never done anything to harm or hurt us. At the astral level of consciousness, we are able to see exactly WHY! We are able to see the nature of our relationship with that person at this higher level of reality, and how this “reality” has been reflected, to some extent, at this lower level of physical consciousness. At the astral level, we see what they did to us and what we have done to them. We come to realize that it was a lesson learned from this previous astral episode, which now causes us to dislike a certain person, for no “apparent” reason, at this lower level of consciousness. Also, we meet people whom we immediately like. Why? Same reason!

There are some places we go and feel we have been there before. What is referred to as “dejavu”, the feeling of having “seen” it all before. Yet, physically speaking, we know that we have never been there before! When we “awake” to the higher astral level of consciousness, we are able to recall precisely when we saw that place or thing for the first time. It was seen in an earlier episode from the previous life, before we slept into this physical level of consciousness.

These are just a few of the experiences we all have had, which convince us of not only a higher level of consciousness, but also gives us insight into many other perplexing experiences we are unable to explain. The astral level of consciousness is only one step above in the hierarchy of levels of human consciousness. There are possibilities of raising levels of consciousness far above this. What would be the next step?

## **LEVELS OF HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS**

### **(Part II)**

Above the astral level of consciousness, there is another level of consciousness which we call the “mental” or “causal” level of consciousness. When we awake further from the astral level of consciousness to the causal level of consciousness, we are then able to see people in their pure mental forms. We no longer are restricted to seeing them in the categories of sense perceptions. At this causal level of consciousness, we no longer communicate with each other by telepathy, but by direct perception! Direct perception is entirely different from telepathy! With telepathy, one says something in one’s own mind and then, the other person listens with his mind. In direct perception, you don’t say anything! The other person, who has also attained causal consciousness, already “KNOWS” your thoughts. It is what we call “transference” of understanding. It is a common experience at the causal level of consciousness to communicate through the transference of understanding!

The recollection of memories that we regain at the causal level of consciousness goes back to the very beginning of time! To the very first instance of time, whenever that was! And our knowledge moves onwards to the very edge of time, whatever

that means! At this causal level of consciousness, we are able to see that in the astral experience, we merely picked up a part of this causal experience, confined it to a certain time frame, and went through it like a dream. And then, some part of this astral experience was picked up in the physical level of consciousness, and projected upon the screen of this physical world where we experience it! In the causal level of consciousness—the “pure” mental level of consciousness—not just this mind sitting in this physical body, but the actual “shifting” of our level of consciousness, our experiences are far more beautiful. Our knowledge greatly transcends that of the astral level!

When we are able to awake further from the astral level of consciousness, through an actual process of wakefulness . . . when this takes place, we gain access to all that has ever happened and all that will ever happen to us! Not only to us personally, but to anybody . . . anywhere in the world! We regain a universal memory, a universal mind and a universal repository of experience which is available to us at this causal level of consciousness. It is difficult to describe the beauty and immensity of knowledge flowing at this level of human consciousness! The entire “universal mind”, the single mind which operates through millions and billions of individual minds at the lower levels of consciousness, is available to us at

the causal level of human consciousness! Through the causal mind, we can know the entire content of all individual minds that exist or that will ever exist! The experience and knowledge accessible to the causal or universal mind is so immense; the beauty of this experience is so tremendous, that there is no parallel to it at the lower levels of astral and physical consciousness! It is a remarkable experience.

The experience of knowing the contents of all minds, at once, is so unique and so unusual, that there is no possibility of any dream-like yogic experience ever being compared to it. Causal consciousness is a much, much higher experience than these lower “astral” experiences. When we are able to reach the causal level of consciousness, we are able to have experience through “pure” mind, without the restriction of the grosser astral body. The astral body is as restrictive and gross upon the causal self, as the physical body is upon the astral self! At the astral level, we discover that we had been unable to do or go where we wish because of this physical body. Similarly, at the causal level, we discover that the astral body itself prevents us from having immediate and complete experiences! All of our astral experiences are divided into the various categories of sensory perception, i.e., seeing, tasting, smelling and so on. We are limited to the experiencing of the “whole” through its parts.

Astral consciousness provides us only with “partial” experiences of reality! Human attention plays an important role in all astral perceptions, and the narrow scope of attention restricts and limits our experiences. We are only able to have a “part by part” regulated awareness of an experience . . . never the direct, simultaneous experience of the whole! At the causal level, the third and next higher level of consciousness above the astral level, you become “one” with the entire “mind” of all mankind . . . the universal mind! You are able to “know” directly, and not part by part, the entire experience had by all minds, throughout the whole history of mankind, as well as all the future experiences of mankind! It is a tremendous experience, and there has been no way for those who have attained this level of consciousness to describe it!

Even those who have just heard about it, and have tried to describe it could only say, “neti, neti”—not this, not that! They said there is no way to describe it. How can you describe an experience in which the totality of the human mind can be experienced all at one time? The causal experience, the level of the universality of mind, has truly been described by the practitioners of the art of meditation, as the attainment of “God realization”; of having FOUND God! God consciousness has been equated to the consciousness of universal mind. The

consciousness of what is called the “Brahma” in India . . . the Creator. At this causal level of consciousness, man becomes “one” with God. At this level of consciousness, all the knowledge that exists, or could ever exist, is known! One becomes “OMNISCIENT”! Everything that can ever happen in time and space becomes knowable at the causal level of human consciousness!

All “beginnings” exist at this level of consciousness. The beginning of every event occurring in time and space exists at this level! All “middles” and all “endings” of these events are also included there! Everything that has ever happened, or will ever happen within the time-space-causation frame-work, lies here at the causal level in human consciousness! It is one of the most beautiful experiences available in human consciousness! And all of this is attained by awakening from the astral level of consciousness. By an actual, willful and deliberate experience of “wakefulness” . . . of waking from the astral level of consciousness. When this happens, we are able to recall the previous state of consciousness we had, before sleeping in the astral level of consciousness. The whole of our memory comes back to us! The total memory of all mankind comes back to us, and we recall how this total experience was split up into various segments, in order to sustain the dream sequences below. The

totality of all possible experiences are stored at this causal level of consciousness. After having said so much about this causal level, you are probably presuming that there can be no higher level of consciousness beyond this! At this level everything is included . . . even God. Therefore, many practitioners of religion, yoga, meditation and so on, have taken it as the last and highest state of consciousness. They have said that this is the ultimate level of consciousness. One has reached the region of universal mind, what else could there be beyond it? What else could there be beyond time, space and causation? And yet, I say, there is still a level of consciousness beyond this causal level of consciousness! This is the level beyond the mind, which is called the level of “pure spiritual consciousness”.

What then, would this fourth level of consciousness beyond the mind, beyond time, space and causation be like? Whatever I have described up to this point—the totality of human experience—all takes place in time, space and causality. Everything that is there at the level of causal consciousness, universal mind, universal memory, universal experience . . . all these experiences, even if universal, are locked within the framework of time, space and causation. This totality of experience is confined to the time-space continuum. The level of pure “spiritual” consciousness lies beyond time-space and

causation. At this level of consciousness, one is able to experience the pure soul! It is the experience of pure human consciousness, without any restriction from the mind . . . from the time, space and causation framework. Please note that the mind is not material, not something that exists per se. This must be clearly understood. When human consciousness operates within this time-space-causality framework, it is called mind. Mind is merely a term which connotes the behavior of human consciousness as it operates within this continuum. At the pure spiritual level of consciousness, the restriction of time, space and causation does not come in the way of the freedom of human consciousness.

We have noticed how, at each of the lower levels of consciousness, there was always something which inhibited and restricted the function of the next higher level of consciousness. In the dream state, below the physical wakeful state of consciousness, the jumbled rules and laws of nature restricted our freedom of experience. In the wakeful state, the physical level of consciousness, the gross physical body restricted our freedom and range of experience. At the astral level of consciousness, the sensory system and its division of perception into senses restricted our freedom. And at the causal level of consciousness, it is time-space and causation which restricts the

freedom of our conscious experiences. But when we rise to the level of the human soul, to the level of pure spiritual consciousness, we are able to have conscious experiences unfettered and unrestricted by any of these things! We discover that we are pure, intuitive souls! Pure, intuitive, conscious beings not restricted by any laws, any bodies, any division of perception or any time, space and causality! We don't need bodies; we don't need the mind or any of these apparatuses in order to have conscious experiences. At this "intuitive" level of consciousness, we discover that these were simply encumbrances upon consciousness! They were not aids. We discover that, in fact, they were cages in which consciousness had been locked.

At the pure spiritual level of consciousness, we regain an awareness that transcends the collected awareness of all the levels of consciousness below it! In Indian terminology, they could find no other way to describe this experience except by the word . . . "par-brahma" that which is beyond the "brahm", the Creator! Since the universal consciousness available at the causal level of consciousness has been considered as the level of the Creator, this state of pure spiritual consciousness has been called par-brahm . . . beyond the Creator.

Therefore, you can imagine from what has been said thus

far, how difficult it would be to describe that state of consciousness in which a person can experience that which is beyond the Creator! When we say that, “In the beginning, there was God and he created the heavens . . .” we are referring to the Brahm, the creator of all that come into existence AFTER time! Because the “beginning” was there before the creator. If, in the beginning the creator did this and that, then there was a “time flow” even before the creator! He had to start from the beginning! Who created time? Who created the beginning? Who was beyond beginning . . . beyond the creator?

The human mind cannot possibly, with any amount of effort, conceive of a God that is beyond “time”, beyond the beginning! The highest God that the human mind and intellect can conceive of is one who was there after the beginning. And I am now speaking of a dimension of consciousness that lies beyond time itself! Even when no time existed, we, as conscious beings, existed! The capacity of consciousness, the ability to be aware, was and will remain even when all time ends! And those rarest of practitioners of the art of meditation, those who have reached this fourth level of pure spiritual consciousness, have described it as being so luminous and so bright, that the light coming from our solar sun would be like the light of a match in comparison!

Even if you put ten or twelve suns of this solar system together, it would not equal the brilliance of a single soul! Such is the luster of the human soul! And yet, at this pure spiritual level of consciousness, this immensity of light coming from the human soul looks natural! It seems to be just natural that each of our own conscious selves should have so much light. All of this light has been cloaked and covered by these gross bodies. The physical body, the astral body, the mental body . . . these covers do not let the light shine through!

This light, is the light of our own consciousness. But it has been covered by so many masks that we cannot see this light at this physical level of consciousness. But, when we are able to raise the level of consciousness to the fourth level, to the level of pure soul, we are then able to experience our own light, as well as the light of all other souls! The most interesting thing is that as we rise higher in the levels of consciousness, not only do we experience higher wakefulness, but we also experience ourselves over a much larger span of creation! We experience a widening of awareness and a much greater intensity of aesthetic beauty. Everything becomes perfect! Once this state of consciousness has been attained, your life becomes a melody of tremendous harmony, a festival . . . a celebration! All doubts, all problems, all suffering and misery simply gets dissolved! You

soar high for the first time, and life becomes a great symphony of joy, love and happiness! At the pure spiritual level of human consciousness we are able, for the first time, to know who and what we are.

At this soul level of consciousness, the Socratic challenge to “know thyself” is accomplished! We are then aware of who we are. At last, we have been able to free our consciousness from all the covers, which were coming in the way of our self-knowledge. There had been the mind, the senses, the physical body, dreams and so on blocking our “self-awareness”. Having transcended the lower levels of consciousness, we are able to, at last, experience our “real” self . . . the “me” that we had been mistakenly identifying with the covers upon our consciousness. For the first time, one can say . . . “I KNOW WHO I AM”. Below this level of soul consciousness, one does not know who he is! At the physical level, the body is merely a coat being worn over consciousness. At the astral level, the sensory system of perception through which we experience the world, are merely the “windows” through which our consciousness looks out. The mind is just a house; a framework in which consciousness sits. But at the spiritual level of consciousness, we are able to experience the real self . . . to experience “pure” consciousness! It is the highest flight of consciousness that one can imagine!

Yet I must say to you that this is still not the highest level of human consciousness!

The pure spiritual level of consciousness looks so beautiful, so high and so complete that there doesn't seem to be anything beyond it, and when we try mentally—even intuitively, or by any known process of acquiring knowledge, to think of consciousness beyond this level . . . we fail. All known methods of knowing, including intellect and intuition, will lead to the conclusion that the spiritual level is the highest level of human consciousness. Yet, there are some practitioners of the art of meditation, who tell us that this is still not the highest level of consciousness! What, then is restricting consciousness at the level of pure spiritual consciousness? What is the final cover which is still being worn by human consciousness? The final cover that is restricting consciousness at this fourth level is that of “Individuation”! Individuation restricts and limits our consciousness to being only one consciousness among many! At the fifth level of consciousness, at what is called “TOTAL” consciousness, we discover that the entire scope of conscious experience, is being had by only one experiencer! You discover that there is only one conscious being . . . your OWN self! You transcend the experience of individuality . . . of EGO! At this fifth level of consciousness, you come to realize your totality!

Individuation itself was a cover. It reduced your consciousness to singularity and individuality. Therefore, it was a lower level of consciousness. The fifth level of consciousness, is the highest level of human consciousness. Not merely the highest, but the level of total and supreme conscious experience!

At this level of consciousness, the barrier of individuation is removed and the totality of your own consciousness is experienced unfettered by anything which inhibits its freedom. At this level of total consciousness, total freedom, total experience, total awareness, and the totality of all possible conscious experiences is included. There is absolutely nothing that is lacking at this region of conscious experience. From here, consciousness has decreased, by successive processes of sleep-like experiences, to this physical level of consciousness, in which we are having all our experiences. It is the furthest leap from reality that human consciousness can make! Everything at this physical level of consciousness is dream-like and illusory . . . it is “maya”—the stuff of which dreams are made! We are born in this maya . . . we live in it . . . we think in it . . . we even dream in it. We are philosophers in it . . . we are scientists, teachers, doctors and so on. Stretch your ideas as far as you can, take them higher and higher, call them infinite or by any name you please—still, you will remain in Maya. It cannot be

otherwise! The whole of human knowledge and human experience at this level is an illusion, a dream . . . is maya. Everything that is bound by the laws of time, space and causation is within maya!

I have tried to explain, to the best of my ability, what the levels of human consciousness beyond the physical level would look like. I could not say much beyond the causal level of consciousness, because the time, space and causation continuum end there. Beyond it, there is no time, no space, and no causality. It's like a seed, which flowers when placed in the time-space continuum. Just like when you take a tiny seed and sow it, you do not see the big tree contained in it. Yet, the entire tree is contained in that little seed! It looks a little funny! But, when we allow time to release the potentiality locked up in that seed, the tree is revealed!

In the same way, when the seed of total consciousness is placed into the time-space-causation framework, the entire, infinite, conscious experience of all of the creation is manifested! Everything that has happened, can happen or will happen, is contained in this level of total consciousness. The entire experience of billions and billions of years, as well as all timeless experiences, are included in this level of consciousness. No wonder then, that when asked to describe this state of

consciousness, the only reply from those who have experienced it has been . . . wonder, wonder! Nothing more about it can be said! With this basic understanding about the levels of human consciousness fully grasped, we are now in a position to explore some of the “deeper” aspects of consciousness.

## **Chapter Five**

### **DEEPER ASPECTS OF CONSCIOUSNESS**

This whole world exists because we are conscious. Consciousness is the “creator” of everything that we are experiencing at any of the levels of human consciousness. This “total” consciousness within us is, indeed, the creator of everything that exists. The world of creation, the world which exists around us, exists only to the extent to which we are conscious of it! If consciousness is lost or suspended, then the whole experience of this world is lost. There would be nothing left to sustain any experience of it. There is no possibility of the world existing without human consciousness existing along with it. Without human consciousness being present, how will there be any experience of such a world? Who will experience its existence?

The entire creation has come into being from within, not outside. Therefore, it is human consciousness, the capacity to be aware, which sustains our experiences of this and all other possible worlds. This capacity to be aware (consciousness) does not ever change! Experiences change, but the “experiencer”, human consciousness, never undergoes any changes . . . EVER!

Never has and never will! All changes are “illusions” created by the human mind. It is the human mind which converts our capacity to have conscious experiences, into the additional capacity to have experiences in time, thereby introducing the sensation of “change”. When total conscious experience descends to the level of universal mind, it is divided into time! Into beginnings, middles and ends—into todays and tomorrows—into days and nights and so on. But this is only a DIVISION of conscious experience. Consciousness itself has not been divided! These changes and motions in conscious experiences, is caused when consciousness functions through the time-space and causation framework! What are these things, time-space and causation? Are they something real, or just an idea?

The German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, offers an explanation which is consistent with what Eastern philosophers have been saying for thousands of years! He states that, there is no such thing as time, space and causation. They are simply categories of the mind! THEY ARE THE MIND! Mind is consciousness when it functions through the time-space-causation framework. This framework IS the mind! When consciousness is pumped into experience and picks up a beginning, a middle and an end, this is called mind. It becomes

what we call a “mental” experience.

This mind, then, is the cause of all the changes we experience. We are still capable of knowing our own consciousness at this level, but it will be in terms of changes. From the level of the mind, our conscious experience is then projected into the sensory system, and gets even further divided into sense perceptions! Each sense, in turn, then picks up a piece or a part of our conscious experience. Even still, consciousness, *per se*, has not been broken up into these functional divisions of the senses!

Finally, on top of all this, the gross physical body is added. When Conscious experience functions through the organs of perception in the physical body, it limits our experience to grossness; completely cutting us off from the original experience of “pure” total Consciousness! But, even at this lowest level of conscious experience, human consciousness itself, the “experiencer” of all conscious experiences, remains absolutely the same! Consciousness, which uses a soul, a mind, the senses and the gross physical body, persist unchanged and unaltered, at every level of human consciousness! It persists at all time and beyond all time! Human consciousness is never born, and therefore never dies, never disappears.

The question naturally arises as to whether the self, whether total consciousness, which takes many forms, itself, has a form? When self-realization, when total consciousness is achieved, in what form will we experience it? Total consciousness, the point from where all conscious experience flows, does it, itself, has a form? Yes! This self has a very subtle form, the form of a resonance, a vibration . . . the form of a SOUND! This “sound” is emanating from the self, from the “atman”, from the soul of man! When we raise the level of our consciousness to that of total consciousness, we discover that this sound is actually coming from the total self! This Sound originating from the total self, the ultimate creator of our conscious experience, manifests itself as an individuated soul! This Sound is the form of our own consciousness. It sounds strange, but it is the truth.

If I were to tell you that, it is because we can “listen” to the “sound” of our own consciousness, that we are able to have any experience, you will be very surprised. But it is the truth! All our perceptions; seeing, tasting, touching and so on, are possible because we “listen” to this sound of our own consciousness. All these perceptions give us an experience because we can “listen”. When you see a thing with your eyes, how do you “know” what you are seeing? After seeing it, very

quickly, almost simultaneously, your mind says to you, that's a flower or that's a house and so on! When it says this, and you LISTEN to your own thoughts about what you are seeing, you then "know" what it is that you are looking at! These eyes cannot pick up any "meaningful" experience, unless the mind "comments" on what is being experienced! You have to listen to the "thoughts" accompanying sense perceptions, in order to have a conscious experience of the objects perceived.

You cannot hear without listening; you cannot see; you cannot taste; you cannot touch or smell without listening to the thoughts—to the "sound" accompanying these experiences in your consciousness. You can have no perception without listening! Therefore, listening or "Surat", the power to listen, is the basic and most fundamental faculty in human consciousness. At the highest level of consciousness, it is found that "nirat", the power to see, is simply an extension of surat, the power to hear! Therefore, the capacity to be heard is the chief characteristic of human consciousness. It is no wonder that God—that the ultimate creator . . . total consciousness, has been described as a "SOUND"! As that which can be heard! As that which can be listened to! No wonder that St. John's Gospel says that, "in the beginning was the "WORD" and the word WAS GOD!" No wonder that the Hindus believe "OM", the first word of the

Vedas, was the creator of the universe! No wonder that “Shabd”, the “SOUND”, has been described as the creator of this universe! No wonder the Greeks say that the “LOGOS”—the word—is the creator! That the Koran says that “KALMA”—the word or sound—is the creator! It is no small wonder why every major religion in the world, without exception, has used the same term, in their own language, to describe the creator as the word . . . the sound . . . that which can be heard! Whether it is Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism or any other religion, you will find that it was the sound, the word which has created this entire creation! If there was a beginning, the only thing that was there was the “WORD”. It’s remarkable! And whatever exists is a manifestation of this “current” of sound emanating from our total consciousness! One who becomes conscious of the highest manifestation of the sound, becomes one with the ultimate creator; becomes one with . . . the LORD!

Therefore, the whole discovery of what is the “real” self, is the progressive discovery of the nature of our own consciousness, which we call the soul. The soul is known when we can experience our own consciousness, without the covers of the mind, the sensory perceptions and the gross physical body. Total self is realized when we are able to remove the final cover of individuation. When all these things have been done, you are

able to say that you “know thyself”. That you are total consciousness, that, indeed, you are . . . God!

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Ishwar Puri is an international traveler and lecturer on a wide variety of subjects. Each of his eloquent presentations is made without reference to notes and includes art, religion, human relations, science, philosophy, human awareness, consciousness, and many other subjects. The lectures are motivating, enlightening, and reflects the highest flight of philosophy and human understanding.

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